

Saint Paul's Shorter Letters

Robert G. Hoerber

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Robert G. Hoerber

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To My Parents

Adele A. Hoerber

Eugene T. Hoerber

Foreword

NO DOUBT you appreciate the need and value of reading your Bible. But if you have the experience of most people, your interest lags when you read some portions which you find difficult—especially the Letters of St. Paul.

Your experience is only natural and has a twofold cause. One is the use of obsolete phrases and awkward expressions. The other is the form in which many editions are printed. Few books would be best sellers, printed in columns, divided into verses and containing phrases as "bowels of mercy."

It is our aim to provide for you a fresh rendering of St. Paul's Shorter Letters. We have attempted to express as accurately as possible in clear and current English the thought of the original Greek according to the texts of Eberhard and Erwin Nestle (Stuttgart, 1932) and of Alexander Souter (Oxford, 1947). Proper paragraphing has taken the place of confusing division into verses.

We pray that you read these Letters frequently and carefully, particularly in your home and Bible class, and that they may be a constant source of spiritual strength in your daily life.

Soli Deo Gloria!

ROBERT G. HOERBER

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To the Galatians

I, PAUL, an apostle—I am not an apostle of men, nor was I sent out by any human being; but I was sent out by Jesus Christ and by God the Father, who raised him from the dead—I, Paul, together with all the fellow Christians who are with me, am writing this letter to you who are members of the congregations in Galatia. We extend to you blessing and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself in behalf of our sins, in order to save us from the present world, evil as it is. This salvation is the will of God, who is also our Father. To him may there be glory in all eternity. Amen.

I am surprised at you that you are turning aside so soon from Christ, who has called you by grace, to another gospel—although there is no other. But there are some persons who are trying to confuse you and who desire to misrepresent the gospel of Christ. But even if I or an angel from heaven ever preaches a message which does not agree with what I have preached to you, consider it a damnable thing. Let me repeat now again what I have just stated conclusively—if anyone is preaching to you a message which does not agree with what you have received, consider it a damnable thing.

Tell me now—do I try to appeal to men rather than to God? Or do I attempt to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. In fact I certify to you, fellow Christians, that the gospel which I have preached is not a human message. For neither did I receive it from any human being, nor was I instructed by any human being. On the contrary, I received it and was instructed through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

You have heard of course about my conduct at one time when I followed the cult of the Hebrews—how excessively I kept persecuting the church of God and was trying to de-

stroy it, and how I was advancing in the cult of the Hebrews ahead of many among my race who were of the same age, because I inwardly had more intense zeal for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God, to whom I owe my appointment from birth and my conversion through his grace, determined to reveal his Son to me, that I might preach about him among the Gentiles, I did not at once consult with any human beings, nor did I at once go up to Jerusalem to those who had been apostles before my conversion; on the contrary, I departed into Arabia and later I returned to Damascus.

Three years after my conversion I went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter; I stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see anyone else of the apostles except James the brother of the Lord. I swear before God that I am not falsifying the events about which I am writing to you. I then proceeded into the territories of Syria and Cilicia. The members of the Christian congregations in Judea did not yet know me personally; they had only heard it reported: "The person who at one time was persecuting us is now preaching the faith which at one time he was trying to destroy." They also were praising God for my conversion.

2* Later on, fourteen years after my conversion, I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and I took along also Titus. I went up this time, however, because of a revelation, and I conferred with the men in Jerusalem concerning the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles. I conferred privately with the prominent men, because I feared that I might run the risk of laboring or having labored in vain. But not even Titus, my companion, although he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. The reason was the uninvited presence of false teachers who had sneaked in to spy on the liberty which we possess through Christ Jesus; they were attempting to enslave us. But we did not yield for a moment by conceding to them; therefore the gospel remains for you in all its truth.

From those, furthermore, who had some reputation I re-

* Marginal numerals denote chapter divisions.

ceived no instruction. (Their previous reputation does not concern me, for God does not consider the impression a person makes.) In fact these prominent men made no addition to my message. It was quite the contrary. They realized that I am entrusted with preaching to the uncircumcised Gentiles just as Peter preaches to the circumcised Hebrews; for he who moved Peter to carry on missionary work among the Hebrews has also moved me to carry on missionary work among the Gentiles. Since James and Peter and John, who were considered the leaders, acknowledged the blessing which I had received, they gave their pledge of agreement by shaking hands with Barnabas and me, with the understanding that we should preach to the Gentiles while they would preach to the Hebrews. The only thing they reminded us was to continue to pay attention to the poor, which I have been very careful to do.

When Peter came to Antioch, however, I opposed him face to face, because he was acting on a misjudgment. For before some persons arrived from James, he was eating in company with the Gentiles. But upon their arrival he tried to conceal himself and began to withdraw, because he was afraid of what the Hebrews might think. Also the other Hebrews joined in his pretence, and even Barnabas was misled by their hypocrisy. When I realized, however, that they were not acting correctly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of everyone: "If you, although you are a Hebrew by nature, conduct yourself in the manner of Gentiles and not in the manner of Hebrews, how can you try to force the Gentiles to adopt the customs of the Hebrews?"

By race we are Hebrews and not sinful Gentiles. Yet because we know that a man is not justified as a result of his performance of the law, but rather is justified through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have put our trust in Christ Jesus. We have been justified, therefore, as a result of our faith in Christ and not as a result of our performance of the law; for no human being will be justified on the basis of his performance of the law.

Now if sin is found also in us, although we claim to be

justified by Christ, does that make Christ a promoter of sin? By no means! For if I begin to rebuild what I have destroyed, I establish myself as a traitor. In fact it is through the law that I have become dead to the law and therefore live for God. I nail my sins to the cross of Christ. It is no longer I who live; it is rather Christ who lives in me. The physical existence which I now carry on I carry on through faith in the Son of God, who loved me and sacrificed himself in my behalf. I give full credit to the grace of God. In fact if righteousness is obtainable through fulfilment of the law, then Christ's death has been in vain.

3 O you foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell over you? The crucifixion of Jesus Christ has been vividly described in your presence. I wish to ask you merely one question. Did you receive the Spirit as a result of your performance of the law, or by faith as a result of hearing the gospel? Are you so foolish? Are you trying to complete by human means what you have begun by spiritual means? Have you experienced so many things for nothing?—that is, if they are for nothing. Now does God furnish you with his Spirit and perform miracles among you as a result of your performance of the law, or by faith as a result of hearing the gospel?

Abraham, for example, "believed God and his faith was credited to his account as righteousness." Rest assured, then, that those who believe are sons of Abraham. Since the Scripture foresaw that God justifies the Gentiles as a result of faith, it announced long ago to Abraham: "All the Gentiles will be accounted blessed through you." Those who believe, therefore, are accounted blessed together with Abraham, a man of faith.

In fact whoever relies on his performance of the law is under a curse. For the Scripture states: "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by and perform everything which is written in the book of the law." It is clear that in the sight of God no one is justified through the law, because "the justified man will have life as a result of faith." But the law is not the result of faith. On the contrary, "a person will have life

through the law if he has performed its demands." Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, because he became a curse in our behalf. He has become a curse because the Scripture states: "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree." The blessing of Abraham, therefore, extends to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; and we, therefore, receive the promise of the Spirit through our faith.

Fellow Christians, let me give you an illustration from human society. No one cancels or makes additions to a will and testament even of a human being if it is certified. Now the promises were declared to Abraham and to his "descendant." The Scripture does not use the plural, "descendants," as if the promise were dependent upon many people. On the contrary, as the promise is dependent upon one individual, the Scripture uses the singular, "and to your descendant," who is Christ. This is the point I wish to bring out—that God's will and testament, since it had been certified previously by him, is not cancelled by the law which came four hundred thirty years later; the law does not abolish the promise. In fact if inheritance were based upon the law, then it would no longer be the result of promise. Yet Abraham received this blessing from God through promise.

Why then was the law given? It was added later on account of our transgressions, pointing to the coming of the descendant in whom God's promise was declared. It was ordained through angels by means of a mediator. Now there can be no mediator when only one individual is involved, although God is only one. Does the law then oppose God's promises? By no means! In fact if a law had been given which was able to give eternal life, righteousness would truly be based upon the law. But the Scripture has enclosed all under sin, and therefore the promise is given to those who believe as a result of faith in Jesus Christ.

Now before faith appeared we were hemmed in under the law, being enclosed for the faith which was to be revealed. The result is that the law has proved to be our guide, leading

us to Christ, in order that we might be justified as a result of faith. But since faith has appeared we are no longer under the control of a guide. In fact all of you are sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus. For whoever of you have been baptized in Christ's name have joined up with Christ. You are not classified as either Hebrew or Greek; nor are you classified as either a slave or a free man; nor are you classified as either male or female. For all of you are one in Christ Jesus. Now if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs on the basis of God's promise.

- 4 Let me illustrate further. As long as an heir is immature, he is not given any more authority than a slave, although everything belongs to him. On the contrary, he is under the supervision of guardians and trustees until the time arrives which his father has determined. Likewise also we were enslaved to elementary worldly concepts as long as we were immature. But when the proper time arrived, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman and made subject to the law, in order that he might redeem those who are subject to the law and that we might be adopted as sons. Now because you are sons, God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, shouting: "Abba," which means Father. The result is that you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if you are a son, you are also an heir—thanks to God.

Formerly, however, because you did not know God, you were enslaved to gods which really do not exist. But now, because you have acknowledged God—or rather because God has acknowledged you—how can you return again to feeble and unsubstantial elementary concepts and be willing to be enslaved to them all over again? You are superstitious about certain days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored for you in vain.

Follow my example, fellow Christians, I beg of you, because my status is the same as yours. You have not injured me in any respect. You realize, furthermore, that it was because of a physical ailment I first preached the gospel to you, and

that you did not shun or avoid the disagreeableness of my condition. On the contrary, you accepted me as if I were an angel of God, or as you would accept Christ Jesus. What then has become of your kind affection? In fact I give you my word of honor that you would have gouged out your eyes, if possible, and would have given them to me. Have I, therefore, become your enemy because I tell you the truth? These persons are showing interest in you for no good purpose. On the contrary, they wish to hinder you, hoping that you show interest in them. Now it is commendable to be the object of interest in a noble undertaking at all times, and not only when I am in your presence, my beloved. My heart pains again for you, until Christ is firmly established among you. Would that I now were with you in person and were addressing you orally, for I am worried about you.

Tell me, you who wish to be subject to the law, do you not understand the law? The Scripture states, for example, that Abraham had two sons. One was born of his slave girl; the other was born of his wife who was free. The son of his slave girl, however, was born according to natural means; while the son of his wife was born because of God's promise. These incidents serve as illustrations; for they represent God's two decrees. The one decree came from Mount Sinai and gives birth to slavery. It is illustrated by Hagar. Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city Jerusalem; for Jerusalem and her children are in slavery. But the Jerusalem above is free and she is our mother. In fact the Scripture states:

"Be glad, O childless one, although you don't beget;
Exclaim and shout for joy, although you don't give birth;
Because the offspring of the barren one will be
More numerous than those of any married spouse."

Now you, fellow Christians, are children of promise, as Isaac was. As the son, however, who was born of natural means was persecuting the son born of the Spirit, so it is now. But what does the Scripture state? "Banish the slave girl and

her offspring; for the offspring of the slave girl shall not be a joint heir with the son of the free wife." Therefore, fellow Christians, we are not children of slavery; on the contrary,
5 we are children of freedom. By his freedom Christ has freed us. Stand firm then and do not become involved again in the bondage of slavery.

Consider what I, Paul, am trying to tell you—that if you submit to circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Again I give my word of honor to every human being who submits to circumcision, that he is obligated to perform all the demands of the law. You who attempt to become justified through the law have parted company with Christ; you have separated yourselves from his grace. For we eagerly await the hope of righteousness through the Spirit as a result of faith. In fact in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor the lack of circumcision has any power. On the contrary, what does count is faith operating through love.

You were on the right track. Who has hindered you from being persuaded by the truth? The persuasion you now have is not from him who has called you. A little falsehood corrupts the entire teaching. I am confident of you through the Lord that you will not be obstinate, and that whoever is confusing you will endure the punishment, whoever he may be. Furthermore, fellow Christians, if I were still advocating circumcision, why am I still experiencing opposition? In that case the stumbling-block of Christ's crucifixion would be removed. Would that those who are confusing you also remove themselves!

Yes, fellow Christians, you have been called to freedom; only do not interpret your freedom as an excuse for your human nature. On the contrary, with love you should render service to one another. In fact the entire law is summarized in one sentence; namely, "You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself." If, however, you are bitter and destructive toward one another, beware that you be not destroyed by one another.

This is the point I am trying to make—follow the Spirit;

then you will not submit to the passion of human nature. For human nature has passions opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit opposes human nature. In fact they are directly opposite to each other. Therefore do not do everything you desire. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

Now the expressions of human nature are well known; namely, prostitution, impurity, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousals and the like. I warn you as I have stated previously—that those who perform such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. The product of the Spirit, however, is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustworthiness, gentleness, self-control. There is no law against such things. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed to the cross the evil desires and passions of their human nature.

Since we live through the Spirit, let us also be led by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited by challenging or envying one another. Fellow Christians, if ever a person is detected in some transgression, you who are followers of the Spirit ought to set him straight with a kindly attitude, realizing that you yourself may become a victim of temptation. You ought to assist one another in enduring the trials of life; in this way you will abide by Christ's command. In fact if anyone supposes that he is somebody, although he is nothing, he is deceiving himself. Every person should examine his own actions; then he will take pride only in himself and will not gloat over his neighbor. For every person will be responsible for himself.

Whoever receives instruction in the Christian doctrine should share all his blessings with the person who teaches him. Do not be misled; you cannot outwit God. In fact a person will harvest whatever he plants. I mean that whoever plants for the benefit of his human nature will harvest destruction from his human nature; but whoever plants for the benefit of the Spirit will harvest eternal life from the Spirit.

Let us not become tired of doing what is noble; for at the proper time we shall harvest, if we do not become careless. Most assuredly then, whenever we have opportunity, let us do good to all men and particularly to our fellow believers.

Look at the large letters I make when I take the pen in my own hand. The people who wish to make a good impression through human nature are trying to compel you to be circumcised. They have only one purpose—that they may not be persecuted for Christ's crucifixion. In fact even those who are circumcised do not fulfill the law themselves. They wish you to be circumcised, however, in order to boast of your human nature. But I pray that I may never boast except of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through his crucifixion the world and I have no common basis. For neither circumcision nor the lack of circumcision means anything. What does count is a new creation. For those who will follow this rule—that is, for God's true people—there is peace and mercy.

In the future let no one give me trouble; for I have on my body the scars that mark me as a servant of Jesus.

May the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, fellow Christians. Amen.

To the Ephesians

I, PAUL, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, am writing this letter to you Christians who live in Ephesus and believe in Christ Jesus. I extend to you blessing and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be God, who is also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and who has blessed us through Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens. Before he established the universe, for example, he chose us through Christ to be holy and spotless in his sight. With love he set us apart through Jesus Christ to become his sons according to the decision of his will, that we might praise his glorious grace which he has bestowed upon us through his beloved Son. Through the blood of Christ we have been redeemed and our sins are forgiven, as a result of the richness of his grace which he has multiplied upon us. With complete wisdom and intelligence he has made known to us the secret of his will, according to his decision which he made previously concerning Christ, to arrange the proper time for everything both in heaven and on earth to culminate in Christ. Through Christ we also have been allotted an inheritance because we have been set apart by the decision of God, who controls everything according to the plan of his will, that we who have our hope placed in Christ might be a praise to God's glory. Also you, since you heard the word of truth, even the good news of your salvation, and since you have put your trust in Christ, through Christ have been guaranteed the promise by the Holy Spirit. He is the earnest money of our inheritance, assuring us that our redemption is secure and that we are a praise to God's glory.

Therefore, since I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love toward all Christians, I continually thank God in your behalf when I think of you in my prayers.

I pray that God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may grant you spiritual wisdom and revelation through the knowledge of himself; that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened; and that you may realize the hope Christians possess because God called them, the glorious wealth Christians possess because God adopted them, and the exceeding magnitude of his power toward us who have faith as a result of his mighty strength. He demonstrated his power in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavens, making him far superior to every empire and authority and power and dominion, and to every title which is bestowed not only in this world but also in the world to come. He subjected everything under Christ's feet and gave Christ to the church as head over everything. The church is Christ's body, even the perfection of him who perfects everything everywhere.

- 2 God also has demonstrated his power in you, although you were spiritually dead through your trespasses and sins. Formerly you lived in sin in line with the trend of this world and the ruler who influences its atmosphere. I mean the evil spirit who is still active in his followers who reject Christ. Among them we all formerly lived with the passions of our human nature. Because we were following the desires of our human nature and its thoughts, we naturally were doomed to God's wrath just as the rest. But God, since he is rich in mercy and because of his great love which he bestowed upon us, through Christ has given spiritual life to us, although we were spiritually dead through our trespasses. You are saved by grace. Through Christ Jesus he has granted us resurrection and a place in the heavens; therefore he demonstrates to the succeeding generations the exceeding richness of his grace by his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For you are saved by grace through faith. It is not the result of your own actions; it is the gift of God. It is not the result of good works; therefore no one may become boastful. In fact we are God's product, because we have been created through Christ

Jesus for the good functions in which God has previously prepared us to live.

Bear in mind, therefore, that formerly you were heathen Gentiles through your human nature. You were called "unclean" by those who take pride in physical circumcision through human means. Bear in mind that at that time you were without Christ, since you were aliens without citizenship in the kingdom of God's people, and were strangers to the promises contained in God's will and testament. You had no hope and you were in the world separated from God. But now, through Christ Jesus and his blood, you who were formerly far from God have been drawn near to God. For Christ is the source of our peace. He has united both divisions and has broken down the wall which separated us—namely, God's anger. Through his human nature he has abolished the demands of the decrees of the law. He personally, therefore, has created out of the two groups one new people by making peace with God; and through his crucifixion he has reconciled to God both groups in one fold, by personally having satisfied God's wrath. When Christ appeared, he proclaimed peace to you who were far away and to those who were near. For through him we both can approach our Father with a spirit of unity. Most assuredly then, you are no longer strangers and foreigners. On the contrary, you are fellow citizens with the Christians and members of God's household, because you have been established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. Through him every part of the structure is closely connected and grows into a temple sanctified by the Lord. Through him also you are part of the structure built into God's spiritual abode.

I, Paul, therefore, have become a prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles. You no doubt have heard of the gracious assignment which God gave me in regard to you. I mean that by revelation he made known to me his secret, as I have just described briefly. When you read that, you will

3

be able to understand my knowledge of the secret concerning Christ. In previous generations it was not made known to the children of mankind as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets. I mean that through Christ Jesus the Gentiles are joint heirs and of one fold with the Hebrews and share the promise which comes through the gospel. I have become a promoter of this gospel because of God's gracious gift which he granted to me as a result of his power. To me, who am the least of all Christians, this blessing has been given—to preach to the Gentiles the immeasurable richness of Christ and to make clear the plan of the secret which has been hidden from generations by God, who has created everything—in order that God's manifold wisdom might now be made known through his church by his heavenly power and authority, in line with his decision which from eternity he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. Through Christ and our faith in him we can approach God and address him with confidence. I pray, therefore, that I not become discouraged over the troubles I am enduring in your behalf. It will turn out to your glory.

This is my prayer when I fall on my knees before our Father, from whom the entire family of Christians in heaven and on earth derives its descent—that through his Spirit he strengthen you mightily in your inner nature with the richness of his glory; that through your faith Christ may live in your hearts; and that by being established upon the roots and foundation of God's love you may be able to comprehend together with all Christians its width and length and height and depth, to realize the love of Christ which surpasses your understanding, and to experience God's perfection completely fulfilled in you.

To God, who through his power operating in us is capable of accomplishing exceedingly more than anything we ask or imagine, may there be glory through his church and through Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever. Amen.

Now as a prisoner for the Lord I request that you conduct yourselves in a manner befitting the Christian calling which you have received. With complete humility and gentleness, with patience and love bear with one another. Be conscientious about maintaining your spiritual unity in peaceful association. Be unified in organization and unified spiritually. Your calling as Christians, for example, rests upon one hope. You have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, who controls all and operates through all and permeates all. Upon each one of us, however, God's blessing has been bestowed in proportion to Christ's gift. Thus the Scripture states:

"He ascended on high, overcoming subjection;
He has given his gifts to mankind."

Now what is implied by "he ascended" except that he also descended into the lower regions of the earth? He who descended is the same as he who ascended above all the heavens, to complete everything. He himself "has given" some men as apostles, some as prophets, others as missionaries, and others as pastors and teachers. Christ's purpose is that we Christians be equipped for active service in the growth of his body, the church; that we all become united in one faith and acknowledgment of him as the Son of God; and that each of us become spiritually mature in proportion to the completeness of Christ's perfection. He does not wish us any longer to be spiritually immature, becoming confused and carried away by every religious teaching which men cleverly devise with their cunningness in inventing error. But holding to the truth we should lovingly culminate everything in Christ, who is our head. When the entire organization is intimately joined and connected with him through every contact with his nourishment, by the proportionate activity of each particular part it makes progress in its growth through love.

Now this is the point I wish to make and I give you my word of honor in the Lord—no longer live as the heathen Gentiles live through the foolishness of their reason and the

dullness of their understanding. They have departed from the life which God wishes, because of the ignorance which exists within them and because their hearts are obstinate. Having lost the sense of shame they have yielded themselves to lewdness, and greedily practice every vice. But you have not been taught thus about Christ—that is, if you have understood him and have been instructed through him; for Jesus is the source of truth. I mean that you should discontinue your previous manner of living, which was an expression of your former self, which is corrupt in its deceitful passions. You should be revived with a new spiritual attitude and give expression to your new self, which has been created in likeness to God through true righteousness and holiness.

You should stop lying, therefore, and everyone should be truthful with his associates, because we are closely connected. Do not sin by becoming angry. You should not hold grudges overnight. Do not submit to the devil. If anyone is a thief, he should not steal anymore. He should rather work hard with his own hands in doing what is noble; then he will be able to be charitable to those in need. Let no filthy language be uttered from your mouth. On the contrary, let your language be helpful for needful encouragement; then it will be a blessing to those who hear. Do not abuse God's Holy Spirit, by whom you have been guaranteed the day of redemption. Put aside all bitterness, anger, wrath, shouting, profanity and every vice. Be mutually kind and sympathetic; forgive one another, just as God has forgiven you through Christ.

- 5 Now you should be followers of God, since you are his beloved children. You should live in love, just as Christ loved you and gave himself in our behalf as a sacrifice and offering to God with a fragrant scent. But prostitution and every type of impurity or greed should not even be mentioned among you, as is expected of Christians. Neither should there be any indecent or foolish or coarse language; that is not becoming. On the contrary, thankfulness is more appropriate. In fact rest assured that no immoral or impure or greedy person (who

is really an idolater) has any share in the kingdom of Christ and God. Do not let anyone mislead you with shallow arguments. In fact these things bring the wrath of God upon the disobedient people. Do not, therefore, become involved with them. Formerly indeed you were in spiritual darkness, but now you have spiritual light through the Lord. You should live as children of light. For spiritual light produces complete goodness and righteousness and truth. You should give approval to what is pleasing to the Lord. You should not take part in the degenerate deeds of spiritual darkness. You should rather expose them. For although it is disgusting even to mention their secret deeds, nevertheless everything that is exposed by the light becomes apparent; in fact everything that is apparent is light. Therefore the Scripture states:

"Awake, if you're asleep;
Arise, if you are dead;
To you will Christ give light."

Now consider carefully how you are living. Do not live foolishly; on the contrary, live wisely by taking advantage of your opportunity, because the times are evil. Do not, therefore, be careless; but consider what is the Lord's will. Do not become intoxicated on wine, for that is indecent. Rather be filled with the Spirit by reciting to yourselves psalms and hymns and sacred songs, and by singing and humming with all your heart to the Lord. Always be grateful for everything to our God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be subordinate to one another with reverence for Christ.

You wives should be subordinate to your husbands, as you are to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife, as also Christ is the head of the church and is the very Savior of the church, which is his body. Now as the church is subordinate to Christ, thus should wives be subordinate in everything to their husbands. You husbands should love your wives, just as also Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself in her behalf, in order to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water through the word, and to establish for

himself the church in all her glory, free from spot or wrinkle or any such blemish, that she might be holy and without flaw. In the same manner husbands ought to love their wives, as they love their own bodies. Whoever loves his wife loves himself. In fact no one ever has hated himself. On the contrary, everyone nourishes and takes care of himself, just as also Christ nourishes and takes care of the church, because we are parts of his body. "Therefore a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife; and the two of them will become one." This marriage rite is of great significance; I mean in respect to the union between Christ and the church. Nevertheless everyone of you husbands individually should love his wife as he loves himself; and each wife should be careful to respect her husband.

- 6 You children should obey your parents, for that is proper. The commandment, "Honor your father and mother," is the first commandment which contains a promise—namely, "therefore you will prosper and you will enjoy a long life on earth." You fathers should not antagonize your children; on the contrary, you should rear them with Christian education and admonition. You servants should obey your human masters with reverence, respect and sincerity, as you would obey Christ. Do not work only when you are being watched and merely for praise. On the contrary, work as servants of Christ by doing with eagerness what God wishes. Perform your task with a spirit of goodwill, as if you were serving the Lord rather than human beings; for you are aware that whoever does anything good, whether he is a servant or a free man, will be rewarded by the Lord. You masters should treat your servants in the same kind and sincere manner instead of threatening them; for you are aware that Christ in heaven is their Master as well as yours, and that the outward impression a person makes is of no importance in God's sight.

In the future continue to be strengthened spiritually through the Lord and his mighty power. Put on God's complete armor, to be able to withstand the devices of the devil.

For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the empires and authorities and rulers of spiritual darkness and the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore take up God's complete armor, to be able to withstand the evil times and to stand firm in victory. Stand firm then by arming yourself with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the shoes of the gospel of peace. Always take up the shield of faith, by which you will be able to stop the deadly weapons of the evil one. Use also the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. For every request and need pray sincerely at all times. Be on the alert with complete devotion and continual prayer for all Christians and for me, that a message may be given to me when I open my mouth, to make known boldly the secret of the gospel, of which I am a representative in prison, and that I here may state openly why I must proclaim it.

In order that also you may realize how I am faring and what I am doing, Tychicus, our beloved fellow Christian and faithful promoter of the Lord, will give you full information. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may realize our situation and that he may comfort your hearts.

We extend to you, fellow Christians, peace and love, which come with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May his blessing be with all who sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ.

To the Philippians

I, PAUL, am writing this letter together with Timothy as servants of Christ Jesus, to all of you in Philippi who are sanctified by Christ Jesus with your overseers and assistants. We extend to you blessing and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am grateful to my God every time I think of you; every time I pray for all of you I always do so with joy, because of your contact with the gospel from the first day you heard it until now. I am confident that he who has begun the good work among you will continue to perform it until the day of Christ Jesus. It is absolutely proper for me to have such thoughts about you, because you are close to my heart, and because all of you are assisting me in my duty even now when I am in prison and am defending and vindicating the gospel. In fact God can testify how I long for all of you because of our mutual feeling for Christ Jesus. I pray, furthermore, that your love increase even more and more with knowledge and complete insight; that you give approval to what is important; and that you be sincere and genuine until the day of Christ, bringing forth to the glory and praise of God perfect fruit of righteousness, which comes through Jesus Christ.

I wish you to realize, fellow Christians, that my situation has resulted in a greater advancement of the gospel. In fact my imprisonment for Christ has become known in the entire palace and elsewhere; and most of the fellow Christians have received confidence through my imprisonment and have become more exceedingly courageous in proclaiming God's message without fear. It is true that some are motivated by envy and spite; but others preach Christ from personal conviction. The latter are motivated by love, because they realize that I am here to defend the gospel. But the former proclaim Christ from antagonism and insincerely, with the intention of adding trib-

ulation to me while I am in prison. But what difference does it make? What really counts is that Christ is being proclaimed in every way, both in pretence and in sincerity. This fact makes me happy; and, what is more, I shall continue to be happy. In fact I am convinced that through your prayers and the assistance of the Spirit of Jesus Christ everything will turn out for my release. For I have a sincere conviction and expectation that I shall experience no shame; but that with complete freedom, as always, even now Christ's cause will be furthered through me, whether it is through my life or through my death.

In fact, as far as I am concerned, living means service to Christ and dying means an advancement. If living on earth, however, means that my work will bear fruit, I am undecided concerning what to choose. I am torn between two desires—the one is to depart and to be with Christ, which would be far superior; the other, to remain on earth, is more necessary for you. Because this is my conviction, I am confident that I shall remain and stay on with all of you, to assist you and to take pleasure in your faith, and that therefore your rejoicing in Christ Jesus will increase because of me, when I visit you again.

By all means conduct yourselves worthy of the gospel of Christ, in order that, whether I am in your presence and see you or am absent from you, I may hear a good report on you—that you are standing firm in spiritual unity and with one accord are exerting yourselves in common for your faith in the gospel, without being frightened at any time by your opponents. Your fearlessness will be a sign of defeat to them, but to you it will be a sign from God of victory. For you have been blessed with the privilege, not only of believing in Christ, but also of suffering for his cause; you are confronted with the same struggle which I have, as you have seen and about which you are now hearing.

Now if you have received any encouragement from Christ, any comfort from his love, any contact with the Spirit, any

mercy and compassion, make my joy complete by being of one mind, by having mutual love, by being sympathetic and by having a feeling of unity. Do not act through selfishness or pride. On the contrary, with humility think of others as superior to yourselves. Do not individually consider your own advantage, but also the advantage of others. Your attitude should be like that of Christ Jesus. Although he was of the same essence as God, he did not think that being equal with God was a prize to be grasped. Instead he took no advantage of his position, but assumed the essence of a servant and was born as a human being. Furthermore, after he had been born as a human being, he humbled himself by submitting to death, even to death on the cross. For this reason God has exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name which is above any other name. Therefore, to the name of Jesus everyone should bend his knee, whether he lives in heaven, on earth or beneath the earth; and everyone should confess with his tongue to the glory of God the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Therefore, my friends, as you always have been obedient, with reverence and respect show evidence of your salvation, not only as if I were with you, but all the more now that I am absent. In fact it is God who is actively influencing your will and action as he has determined. You should do everything without complaints and arguments. Then you will be above reproach and sincere, as children of God free from blame, although you are in the midst of a crooked and perverted age; you will appear as beacon lights in the world, because you are holding on to the word of life; and you will be my source of pride until the day of Christ, because I have not labored and toiled in vain. However, even if I lose my life because of my sacrifice and service in bringing you to faith, I rejoice personally and together with all of you, and you also should experience the same joy and should rejoice with me.

Now I expect, if the Lord Jesus is willing, to send Timothy to you soon, in order that I also may be refreshed when I learn of your situation. In fact I have no one else who is comparable

to him and who will be concerned seriously with your affairs. For all of them are looking out for their own interests instead of the interests of Christ Jesus. You are acquainted with his reputation, and you know that he assisted me in preaching the gospel as if I were his father. Now I expect to send him as soon as I realize the outcome of my situation. I am confident, God willing, that I also shall come soon. I think it necessary, however, to send to you Epaphroditus, my fellow Christian, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who was your representative to me in supplying my needs. He has been desirous of seeing all of you and has been disturbed because you heard that he was ill. Yes, he was ill and was near death. But God had compassion upon him, and upon me as well as upon him, in order that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. Now I am sending him rather eagerly, in order that you may be glad when you see him again, and I may be more relieved. You should welcome him, then, very joyfully with thanks to the Lord, and you should esteem highly such men as he; for on account of Christ's work he nearly died, risking his life to offset my need of you by his service to me.

In the future, my fellow Christians, center your joy in the Lord. To keep telling you the same thing is not displeasing to me; and, furthermore, it is beneficial to you. Beware of those dogs; beware of those workers of evil; beware of their mutilation. In fact we represent the true circumcision; we worship God spiritually; we base all our pride on Christ Jesus instead of relying on human nature, although I personally might rely on human nature. If anyone else thinks that he might rely on human nature, I have even more basis for such reliance. I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I was born an Israelite. I am a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew, born of Hebrew parentage. In respect to the law I was a Pharisee. In respect to eagerness I was persecuting the Christian church. In respect to the standard of the law I was above reproach. But because of Christ I now discount what I formerly counted on. Furthermore, to be sure, I dis-

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count everything else in comparison to the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, who is superior to everything else. Because of Christ I place no value on anything else, but I regard it as trash, in order that I may value Christ and be joined with him, not trusting in my own righteousness on the basis of any fulfilment of the law, but relying on the righteousness which is obtained through faith in Christ and which God grants on the basis of faith. I wish to know him and the power of his resurrection, and to share the benefit of his suffering, being influenced by his death, with the hope of attaining resurrection from the dead. I do not mean that I already have possession or already am finished, but I am pursuing with the hope of winning, because I have been won by Christ Jesus. Fellow Christians, I do not think that it is I who wins; I have one thought—forgetting about what lies behind and exerting myself for what lies ahead, I am pursuing a straight course toward the heavenly prize to which God calls us through Christ Jesus. Let all of us who are spiritually mature have the same thought. If you have any other ideas, God will reveal this to you. But as far as we have progressed we should agree in the same thought.

Follow my example, fellow Christians, and watch those who pattern their lives after us. Indeed, as I have mentioned to you often, and now do so with tears in my eyes, many are living as enemies of Christ's crucifixion. They are heading for damnation; they are making a god out of their stomach; they boast of their shameful life; they center their thoughts on earthly affairs. Our citizenship, however, is centered in heaven, from where we await a Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our mean-spirited bodies to resemble his glorious body, by using his power of being able to subject everything to himself.

- 4 Therefore, fellow Christians, whom I love and long for, my joy and prize, stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.

I appeal to Euodia and I appeal to Syntyche that as Christians they agree. Yes, I also implore you, true comrade, assist

them; they worked hard with me in preaching the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Always center your joy in the Lord; again I say, rejoice. Let all people observe your spirit of fairness. The Lord will come soon. Do not worry about anything; but every time you pray and are in need, with gratitude present your requests to God. Then through Christ Jesus the peace of God, which is beyond all comprehension, will protectively comfort your hearts and your thoughts.

In the future, fellow Christians, meditate on what is true, what is honorable, what is right, what is pure, what is noble, what is holy—on anything that is virtuous and praiseworthy. Act according to what you have learned and received and heard and observed from me; then God, who bestows peace, will be with you.

I was very thankful to the Lord because once again you have revived your interest in me; of course you were always interested, but you did not have opportunity to express it. I do not mean that I am in need. In fact I have learned to be satisfied in whatever situation I find myself. I know how to abstain and I know how to enjoy sufficiency. I have had experience in each and every situation—in being full and in being hungry, in having plenty and in not having enough. In every situation I receive my ability from him who strengthens me. However, you have done well by taking part in my troubles. Also you, Philippians, realize that when I began to preach the gospel, after I left Macedonia, you were the only congregation co-operating with me to the point of contributing for what you had received. Even when I was at Thessalonica you sent more than one contribution for my support. I do not mean that I look for your contribution; I am interested rather in seeing you bear fruit which accumulates to your credit. I have received full payment from you and even more than enough. I have a sufficiency now that I have received from Epaphroditus what you contributed, as a sacrifice with a fragrant scent, ac-

ceptable and pleasing to God. Through Christ Jesus my God will satisfy fully all your needs according to his glorious richness. To our God and Father may there be glory in all eternity. Amen.

Extend greetings to everyone sanctified by Christ Jesus. The fellow Christians who are with me send greetings to you. All the believers extend greetings to you, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

May the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

To the Colossians

I, PAUL, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, am writing this letter together with our fellow Christian Timothy to you at Colossae who are Christians and fellow believers in Christ. We extend to you blessing and peace from God our Father.

We are grateful to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, every time we include you in our prayers, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love you demonstrate toward all Christians. We are grateful for the hope which is reserved for you in heaven and of which you previously heard through the true word of the gospel, which is being preached to you. The gospel is bearing fruit and is being spread over all the world just as also in your midst from the day you heard it and sincerely acknowledged the grace of God. You learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful promoter of Christ in your midst, and he has informed us of your spiritual love.

Therefore, from the day we heard of you, we continue to include you in our prayers, requesting that you come to the full realization of God's will through complete spiritual wisdom and understanding, that you live in a manner worthy of the Lord and entirely pleasing to him, and that you bring forth fruit by every good action, grow in your knowledge of God, and through his glorious power become mightily strengthened in endurance and patience at all times, joyfully grateful to your Father who has made it possible for you to share with the Christians the inheritance of spiritual light. God has rescued us from the power of spiritual darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. Through Christ we have been redeemed and our sins are forgiven. Christ is the image of the invisible God, existing before any creation. For through him everything was created in heaven and on earth, the things which are seen and which are not

seen, including thrones and dominions and empires and authorities. All things exist through his creation and for his purpose. He himself existed before everything, and he personally has organized everything. He himself is the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, the first offspring from the dead; therefore he occupies the first place everywhere. For God determined to implant in him complete perfection and through him to reconcile to himself everything both on earth and in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his crucifixion.

Although formerly you were aliens, mentally hostile and engaged in evil deeds, he now has reconciled you through the death of his human body, to establish you as Christians without flaw or blemish in his sight—that is, provided you remain firmly grounded and steadfast in your faith and are not budged from the hope you have through the gospel, which you have heard, which has been proclaimed to all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a promoter.

At present I am happy in my troubles in your behalf, and I am offsetting my human deficiencies by Christ's sufferings in behalf of the church, which is his body. I have become a promoter of his church as a result of the assignment which God has given to me, to declare fully to you God's message, the secret which was hidden from previous ages and from previous generations. But now it has been revealed to his Christians, to whom God has wished to make known among the Gentiles the glorious richness of this secret—that is, that Christ is with you and is your glorious hope. Christ is the center of our message when we admonish every person and instruct every person as wisely as we are able, in order that through Christ we may establish every person as spiritually mature. For this cause do I labor, working with the energy with which he mightily operates through me.

- 2 In fact I wish you to realize what a great struggle I am undergoing in behalf of you and the Christians in Laodicea and all who have not personally seen me face to face. I am

striving that their hearts may be comforted by being united closely in love and with full benefit of the certainty which is comprehended by acknowledging God's secret ; namely, Christ, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are stored. The point I wish to make is that you should permit no one to mislead you by persuasive arguments. For although I am absent physically, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, and I am happy when I observe your steadiness and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Now just as you have accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you should live with him. You should be rooted and established in him and be firm in your faith, as you have been instructed, overflowing with gratitude.

Beware that no one arises who will captivate you through philosophy and empty pretence, derived from human tradition and elementary worldly concepts instead of from Christ. For in Christ there actually dwells all the perfection of God's deity, and you are perfected through him. He is the head of every empire and authority. Through him you have experienced a supernatural circumcision by the pruning away of your physical human nature and by being grafted to Christ. You have received the benefit of his burial through your baptism. You have received the benefit of his resurrection through your faith, the work of God who raised him from the dead. Although you were spiritually dead through your trespasses and the corruption of your human nature, God has bestowed upon you spiritual life with Christ. God has forgiven us all our trespasses. He has paid our indebtedness to the law's demands, which was facing us, and has completely cancelled the bill, by nailing it to the cross. He has overcome the empires and authorities, made a public spectacle of them, and celebrated his victory over them through Christ.

Now let no one tell you what you should eat and drink, or how you should celebrate a festival, new moon or holy days. These things were merely shadows of the future ; they pointed to Christ. Let no one deprive you of your rights by his inten-

tional disparagement and superstition of angels. Such a person, by trespassing into the world of fancy, is foolishly conceited through his human intellect and does not grasp Christ, who is the head of the church and through whom the entire organization experiences divine growth when it is nourished and joined by its contacts and connections with him.

If you have become freed from elementary worldly concepts by Christ's death, why do you live as though you were still bound to the world and submit to such rules as: "Do not touch," "Do not taste," "Do not handle." All such rules refer to things which are for our use and consumption. They are the result of human regulations and teachings. They have an appearance of wisdom in the self-imposed and disparaging neglect of the body, instead of honorably satisfying the human constitution.

- 3 Now if you have received the benefit of Christ's resurrection, strive after the things above, where Christ dwells, seated at God's right hand. Think of the things above instead of earthly things. In fact you have received the benefit of Christ's death, and with him your life is stored with God. Whenever Christ, who is our source of life, makes his appearance, then also you will appear with him in glory.

Be numb to the practices of the world: prostitution, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which is really idolatry. These practices cause God's wrath to become aroused; they formerly influenced also your conduct, when you were living in them. But now you also should put aside all such things as wrath, anger, vice, blasphemy and obscene language; do not give expression to them. You should not lie to one another, since you have discontinued the pursuits of your former self and have adopted a new self, rejuvenated to acknowledge its Creator after whom it has been modeled. Here there is no classification as Greek or Hebrew, as circumcised or uncircumcised, as barbarian, Scythian, slave or free man. On the contrary, Christ means everything to everyone.

Therefore, since you are God's chosen and beloved Chris-

tians, you should give expression to feelings of tenderness, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. You should be sympathetic to one another and forgive one another, if anyone has cause of complaint against another. Just as also the Lord has forgiven you, so you should forgive one another. In addition to all these things you should give expression to love, which unites and perfects them. The peace which comes from Christ should guide your hearts; into his peace you have been called as a unified body. You should also be grateful. Christ's word should abide in you with all its richness. You should with full wisdom instruct and warn one another. With psalms, hymns and sacred songs you should with thankfulness sing with all your heart to God. Whatever you do, whether by speech or by action, you should do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, being grateful to God the Father through him.

You wives should be subordinate to your husbands, as becomes Christians. You husbands should love your wives and should not be harsh to them. You children should obey your parents in all matters, for that is commendable as Christians. You fathers should not irritate your children, for then they may become discouraged. You servants should obey your human masters in all matters, not only when you are being watched and merely for praise. On the contrary, you should obey with sincerity of heart, because you have reverence for the Lord. In all your activities work with eagerness, as if you were serving Christ rather than human beings, realizing that from the Lord you will receive your inheritance as your reward. Christ is the Master you are serving. In fact whoever commits injustice will be repaid for his injustice; his outward impression will count for nothing. You masters should treat your servants justly and fairly, realizing that also you have a Master in heaven.

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Continue to pray, being alert and thankful when you pray. Also include us in your prayers, asking that God open up for us an opportunity for his message, to proclaim the secret concerning Christ, on account of which I am in prison, and that

I explain why I must proclaim it. Conduct yourselves wisely in relation to outsiders, taking advantage of your opportunity. When you proclaim the message, always do so pleasantly and still convey the meaning, realizing how you ought to reply to every person.

Tychicus, our beloved fellow Christian and faithful promoter and fellow servant of the Lord, will inform you about how I am faring. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may realize our situation and that he may comfort your hearts. I am also sending Onesimus, our faithful and beloved fellow Christian, who is one of you. They will give you full information about the affairs here.

I extend to you greetings from Aristarchus, who is also a captive with me, and from Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he visits you, welcome him.) Also Jesus who is called Justus sends greetings. These are the only converts from the Hebrew cult who have proved to be a comfort to me as fellow workers for the kingdom of God. I extend to you greetings from Epaphras, who is one of you and who as a servant of Christ Jesus always exerts himself in your behalf, praying that you stand firm and with full conviction, abiding by God's complete will. Indeed I can vouch for him that he is quite concerned about you and the Christians in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas send you greetings. Extend our greetings to the fellow Christians in Laodicea, to Nympha and to the members of the congregation which meets at her home. When this letter has been read to you, see to it that it is read also to the members of the congregation at Laodicea, and that you read also the letter coming from Laodicea. Tell Archippus: "Take care that you perform for the Lord the duty which you have received."

I, Paul, am extending greetings with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. May his blessing be with you.

To the Thessalonians I

I, PAUL, am writing this letter together with Silvanus and Timothy to you Thessalonians who are members of the congregation through God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We extend to you blessing and peace.

We are grateful to God for all of you every time we think of you in our prayers; for we continually recall before our God and Father your active faith, your energetic love and your loyal awaiting of our Lord Jesus Christ. We realize, fellow Christians beloved by God, that God has chosen you; because when we preached the gospel, you did not accept it only verbally; on the contrary, you demonstrated its power, you received the Holy Spirit, and you were fully convinced, since you realized what our purpose was in your midst for your sake. You also became followers of us and of the Lord, after you received his word from the Holy Spirit with joy, although you were in the midst of great tribulation. You have, therefore, become a pattern for all the believers in Macedonia and in Greece. In fact the word of the Lord has resounded from you not only in Macedonia and Greece, but the news of the faith which you have in God has spread everywhere. I do not need to mention it at all. In fact of their own accord people tell us what an impression we made on you, and how you have turned from your idols to God, to serve a God who is alive and true, and to await his Son who is coming from heaven and whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus who rescues us from the wrath which is coming.

Indeed you realize yourselves, fellow Christians, that the impression we made on you was not superficial. Although previously we had been ill treated and insulted at Philippi, as you are aware, nevertheless with God's help we took courage to proclaim to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. In fact our appeal does not depend on deceit or trickery,

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nor does it involve questionable motives; but as we have been permitted by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we proclaim it, without attempting to please men, but rather trying to please God, who examines our hearts. In fact we have never used flattering language, as you are aware, or excuses for personal advantage, as God can testify; nor have we sought praise from human beings, either from you or from others, although as apostles of Christ we could insist on our dignity. On the contrary, we have been gentle in your midst, as a mother cherishing her children. With such affection for you we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you became dear to us. Indeed you recall, fellow Christians, how we labored and toiled. We worked night and day, in order that we might not burden any of you while we preached to you the gospel of God. You can testify, and so can God, how devoutly and justly and irreproachably we conducted ourselves toward you who believe. You also are aware how we treated each one of you, as a father does his children, encouraging and urging and appealing to you to live in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

We are continually grateful to God also for this reason—because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as the word of God, which it really is and which is operating also among you who believe. In fact, fellow Christians, through Christ Jesus you have become followers of God's congregations which are in Judea; for you have received the same ill treatment from your fellow countrymen as also they have from the Hebrews, who have killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and have persecuted us. They displease God and oppose all mankind by attempting to prevent us from preaching to the Gentiles, in order that they may be saved. And so their sins are always piling up. But finally God's wrath has caught up with them.

Although for a short time, fellow Christians, we were separated from you physically, but not in spirit, we were exceedingly eager and had great desire to see you in person. We wished, therefore, to visit you—especially I, Paul, more than once; but Satan has delayed us. In fact what hope or joy or prize shall we have to be proud of before our Lord Jesus when he comes? Will it not be you? Yes, you are our pride and joy.

Since we could hold off no longer, we decided to remain behind at Athens by ourselves, and we sent Timothy, our fellow Christian and an assistant of God in preaching the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, in order that no one might be disturbed by these tribulations. Indeed you realize yourselves that we are here for this purpose. In fact when we were with you, we told you in advance that we were going to experience trouble, just as it has happened, as you are aware. Therefore, when I could hold off no longer, I sent to inquire about your faith, fearing that the tempter in some way might have tempted you and that our labor might be for nothing. But since Timothy has now returned to us from you and has reported to us the good news of your faith and love, stating that you always lovingly keep us in mind and are eager to see us, as we are eager to see you, because of your faith we have been encouraged about you, fellow Christians, in spite of all our anguish and trouble; for we now feel like living, since you are standing firm in the Lord. Indeed what thanks can we render to God in return for all the joy we experience before our God on account of you? Night and day we request with exceeding sincerity that we may see you in person and may supply the deficiencies of your faith.

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May our God and Father himself together with our Lord Jesus guide us in our journey to you. May the Lord help you to increase and overflow with love toward one another and toward all people, as also we do toward you. May he thus

establish your hearts firmly and with irreproachable holiness before our God and Father, when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy followers.

- 4 Furthermore, fellow Christians, we request and encourage you in the name of the Lord Jesus that you live as we have instructed you how you ought to live and please God—as indeed you are living—and that you progress more and more. Of course you realize what instructions we gave you from the Lord Jesus. In fact it is God's will that you be consecrated, that you refrain from prostitution, and that each of you know how to keep his body pure and honorable, without the evil desire of passion which is prevalent among the heathen Gentiles who do not know God. No one should try to get the better or take advantage of his neighbor in this matter, for the Lord will avenge all such matters, as we previously stated and solemnly appealed to you. God, to be sure, has not called us to be immoral, but to be pure. Whoever has no respect for this principle, therefore, is not disregarding merely a human being; on the contrary, he is disregarding God who bestows upon you his Holy Spirit.

It is not necessary to write to you concerning the love toward fellow Christians. Indeed you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, and you are doing it toward all the fellow Christians all over Macedonia. But we do encourage you, fellow Christians, to progress more and more, to strive seriously to live a quiet life, to pay attention to your own affairs, and to work hard with your own hands, as we have instructed you. Then your life will gain the respect of the outsiders and in no way will you fall short.

We wish you, fellow Christians, to have a correct conception about the people who die as Christians, in order that you may not grieve as others who are without hope. In fact if we believe that Jesus died and arose, then through Jesus God will bring with him those who have died. Indeed we can tell you on the basis of the Lord's word that those of us who will still be alive when the Lord comes will not precede those who have

died. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with the summons when the archangel sounds the trumpet of God, and those who have died as Christians will arise first; then those of us who will still be alive will be taken up with them on clouds into the sky to meet the Lord, and so we shall be with the Lord forever. Therefore, give one another encouragement with these words.

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But it is not necessary, fellow Christians, to write to you about the exact time and date, for you yourselves clearly realize that the day of the Lord is coming as a thief comes in the night. When people will say, "There is peace and security," then suddenly destruction will come upon them, as pain comes to a woman who is pregnant; and they shall not escape. But you are not in darkness, fellow Christians, so that the day will surprise you as a thief. In fact all of you are children of light and children of the day. We do not belong to night or darkness. Most assuredly then, let us not be negligent as others; on the contrary, let us be on the alert and ready. Indeed those who become negligent do so at night and those who become intoxicated drink at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be ready by arming ourselves with the breastplate of faith and love and with the hope of salvation as our helmet. For God has not destined us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has died for us, in order that we might have life together with him both while we are alive and after we die. Therefore, continue to encourage and improve one another individually, as indeed you are doing.

We urge you, fellow Christians, to acknowledge those who labor in your midst, who are your Christian leaders and who warn you. You should lovingly regard them very highly because of their function. You should live harmoniously with one another. We encourage you, fellow Christians, to warn those who are disorderly, to comfort those who are discouraged, to assist those who are weak, to be patient with all people. See to it that no one tries to retaliate evil for evil;

on the contrary, always be ready to do what is good to one another and to all people. Always rejoice; continually pray. Be grateful for everything, for that is what God wishes you to do as followers of Christ Jesus. Do not hinder the Spirit; do not despise its revelations. Examine everything; retain what is honorable; refrain from every form of evil.

May God himself, who bestows peace, make you completely consecrated. May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and above reproach when our Lord Jesus Christ comes. He who calls you is faithful; he will also do this.

Fellow Christians, include us in your prayers.

Extend greetings to all the fellow Christians with a consecrated kiss. I make it your responsibility to the Lord that this letter be read to all the fellow Christians.

May the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

To the Thessalonians II

I, PAUL, am writing this letter together with Silvanus and Timothy to you Thessalonians who are members of the congregation through God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We extend to you blessing and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We always ought to be grateful to God for you, fellow Christians, as is proper, because your faith is increasing greatly and the love which everyone of you has toward one another is improving. We take personal pride, therefore, in you among the congregations of God because of your steadfastness and faith in spite of all the persecutions and tribulations which you are enduring. They are proof of God's correct judgment and show that you are considered worthy of the kingdom of God, in behalf of which you are experiencing trouble. God will be justified, of course, in repaying tribulation to those who cause you tribulation and in granting rest to you who have tribulation and to us, when the Lord Jesus reveals himself from heaven with his powerful angels in a blaze of fire and takes vengeance upon those who do not acknowledge God and do not heed the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction and separation from the presence of the Lord and his mighty glory, when on that day he comes to be glorified by those he has sanctified and to be worshipped by all who have believed—for you have believed our testimony. We always, therefore, include you in our prayers, requesting that our God consider you worthy of his call and by his power bring to full perfection his decision of kindness and work of faith, in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, as a result of the blessing of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We urge you, fellow Christians, in regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, that

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you not easily be disturbed in your mind nor be terrified either by any attitude or statement or letter, as if from us, claiming that the day of the Lord is near. Let no one deceive you in any way. Remember that first there will come the rebellion against God and there will appear the man of impiety, the son of perdition. He will so oppose and put himself above every being that is called God or is worshipped, so that he will sit in God's temple and display himself as if he were God. Do you not recall that when I was still with you I kept telling you about this? You also realize now what is restraining him from making his appearance before the proper time. In fact the secret work of impiety already is active. But wait until the one who has restrained him so far is removed. Then the impious one will make his appearance; him the Lord will destroy by the breath of his mouth and will put him out of the way when he appears at his arrival. The appearance of the impious one through the assistance of Satan will be accompanied by great power, fictitious signs and wonders and much wicked deceit for those who are doomed to destruction, because they have not accepted God's true love in order to be saved. For this reason God sends to them a deception which results in their trusting in falsehood; therefore, all who have not believed the truth but have consented to wickedness shall be condemned.

We always ought to be grateful to God for you, fellow Christians who are loved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning to be saved through your consecration by the Spirit and your faith in the truth. He has, therefore, called you through our gospel to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most assuredly then, fellow Christians, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings which you have been taught either orally or by one of our letters. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and graciously has granted us everlasting encouragement and blessed hope, encourage your hearts and establish you firmly in every good deed and word.

In the future, fellow Christians, include us in your prayers, requesting that the word of the Lord be spread quickly and be glorified, even as it is among you, and that we be rescued from the harmful and evil persons; for not every person has faith. But the Lord is faithful; he will establish you firmly and will protect you from the evil one. We are confident of you in the Lord that you are following and will continue to follow our instructions. May the Lord guide your hearts that you love God and remain steadfast to Christ.

Our instruction to you, fellow Christians, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is that you avoid any fellow Christian who conducts himself improperly instead of pursuing the teaching you received from us. Indeed you realize yourselves how you ought to follow our example. For we did not behave improperly in your midst. Nor did we accept free board and room from anyone. On the contrary, with toil and labor we worked night and day, in order not to be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have permission to do otherwise; we wished, however, to set a pattern for you to follow. In fact when we were with you, we instructed you that no one should eat if he is not willing to work. Now we hear that some persons among you are conducting themselves improperly, being busybodies and doing no work. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we command and encourage such persons to support themselves by working peacefully.

Furthermore, fellow Christians, you should not become tired of doing what is noble. If anyone does not listen to what we state in this letter, take note of him and do not associate with him; then he will feel ashamed. Do not think of him as an enemy, but warn him as a fellow Christian. May the Lord of peace himself always grant you peace in every way. May the Lord be with all of you.

I, Paul, am extending greetings with my own hand. It is a sign in everyone of my letters. This is my handwriting. May the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

To Timothy I

I, PAUL, an apostle of Christ Jesus upon the authority of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, am writing this letter to you Timothy, a true child in faith. I extend to you blessing, mercy and peace from God our Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I encouraged you when I was proceeding to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus in order to instruct certain persons not to teach false doctrine nor to pay attention to legends and endless family trees; for they cause controversies instead of carrying out God's assignment which is performed through faith. The aim of your instruction should be love arising from a pure heart and from a good conscience and from a genuine faith. Some persons have lost sight of these things and have been diverted into useless talk. They wish to be teachers of the law, although they do not understand either what they are saying or about what they are so positive.

Now we realize that the law is good if anyone uses it legitimately, with the realization that laws are not intended for the righteous but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the impious and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill father or mother, for murderers, prostitutes, sexual perverts, kidnapers, liars, perjurers and anything else opposed to the sound teaching that is based on the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because he has thought me faithful and has placed me into his service, although formerly I blasphemed, persecuted and insulted him. He had mercy upon me, however, because I had acted in ignorance and unbelief, and the blessing of our Lord was bestowed upon me very abundantly, together with faith and love which come through Christ Jesus. It is a reliable statement and worthy of complete acceptance,

that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am the worst of them, but he purposely had mercy upon me, in order that Jesus Christ might display his complete patience on me, since I was the worst, as an example to those who in the future would trust in him for eternal life. To the eternal King, immortal and invisible, the only God, may there be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

This instruction I commit to you, my son Timothy, in accordance with the gift of expounding Scripture which is leading the way for you. See to it that you carry on the noble campaign of preaching, holding fast to your faith and a good conscience. Some persons have rejected this and their faith has suffered shipwreck. Hymenaeus and Alexander are among them; I have turned them over to Satan, in order that they might learn not to blaspheme.

Now first of all, I advise that requests, prayers, entreaties and thanksgivings be offered for all men, for kings and for all who are in official positions, that we may live quiet and peaceful lives with complete piety and reverence. To do this is noble and pleasing to God our Savior, who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the realization of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; he gave himself as a ransom for all men; and his testimony came at the proper time. For this purpose I have been appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling you the truth, I am not lying) to teach the Gentiles faith and truth.

Now I wish the men to offer prayers everywhere, raising up hands that are holy, being free from anger and arguments. Likewise I wish women to dress in neat clothing with modesty and moderation. Instead of displaying braided hair and gold or pearls or expensive garments, they should display good works, as becomes women who profess godliness. A woman should learn quietly and be in a subordinate position. I do not allow a woman to teach publicly or to have full authority over her husband; but she should be quiet. For

Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and fell into sin. They will be saved, however, through motherhood, provided they continue to believe and to show love and holiness with intelligence.

- 3 It is a reliable statement, that whoever is eager to become an overseer desires a noble function. Now an overseer must be above reproach, married only once, with self-control, intelligent, well behaved, hospitable, able to teach; he cannot be a habitual drinker or contentious; rather he must be reasonable and congenial; a man who is not greedy for money, who controls well his own household, and who has children who are obedient and fully respectful—for if a man does not know how to control his own household, how will he take care of a congregation of God? He must not be a man who has been converted recently, for then he may become proud and become a victim of the devil. He must also have a good reputation among the outsiders, for otherwise he may fall into disgrace and be trapped by the devil.

Likewise assistants must be reverent, not two-faced, nor habitual drinkers nor greedy. They must hold fast with a clear conscience to the secret which they have through faith. They should first be examined; then, if they are proved to be above reproach, let them serve as assistants. The women likewise must be reverent, not gossips; they must have self-control and be faithful in all matters. The assistants should be married only once, controlling well their children and their own households. Indeed those who have served well as assistants gain for themselves a noble standing and great confidence through their faith in Christ Jesus.

I am writing to you about these things, although I expect to visit you rather soon; for if I am delayed, I wish you to realize how people must conduct themselves in God's house, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. Undoubtedly great is the secret contained in our religion:

"He appeared in human form, and was justified by the Spirit;

He was seen by the angels, and was preached to the Gentiles; He was believed in by the world, and was taken up into glory."

Now the Spirit clearly says that in later times some persons will depart from the faith by paying attention to deceiving spirits and the teaching of demons through the pretence of men who are liars, who have seared consciences, who forbid people to marry, and who command people to refrain from eating food which God has created, in order that those who believe and acknowledge the truth might partake of it and give thanks for it. For everything which God has created is good, and nothing must be rejected, provided it be received with thankfulness; for then it is consecrated by God's word and by prayer.

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If you emphasize these things to the fellow Christians, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, since you will be strengthened by the words which produce the faith and noble teaching that you are following closely. But reject worldly and heathen legends. Train yourself in godliness. Indeed, while physical training is of some benefit, godliness is beneficial in every way, since it contains a promise of life now and in the future. This is a reliable statement and worthy of complete acceptance. In fact that is the reason we labor and struggle, because we have our hope placed on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

Instruct and teach these things. Let no one defy you because you are young; but for those who believe set an example through your speech, conduct, love, faith and purity. Until I come, be occupied with reading, encouraging and teaching. Do not neglect the blessing you received through the gift of expounding Scripture when the elders laid their hands upon you. Develop and be occupied with these things; then your progress will be evident to all people. Watch yourself and your teaching; stick to these things; for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

Do not scold an older man; rather appeal to him as if he were your father. Treat the younger men as if they were your

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brothers, the older women as if they were your mother, and the younger women with complete purity as if they were your sisters. Respect those who are truly widows. If any widow has children or close relatives, let them first learn to show reverence toward their own family and to repay their ancestors for their care. That indeed is acceptable before God. Now she who is truly a widow and who is left alone has her hope placed on God and continues night and day in her requests and prayers. But a widow who lives wantonly is dead, although she is alive. Instruct the people in these matters, in order that they may be above reproach. Indeed whoever does not provide for his near relatives and especially for his immediate family has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Enroll a woman in the class of widows if she is at least sixty years of age, has had one husband and has a good reputation for noble deeds—for having reared children, for having been hospitable, for having washed the feet of Christians, for having assisted those in trouble, or for having performed any other noble deed. Do not accept the younger women as widows; for when their desire turns them from Christ, they wish to marry and they become guilty of breaking their former promise. Furthermore they learn to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only are they idle, but they also become gossips and meddlers, saying things they ought not to say. I wish, therefore, that the younger women marry, bear children, manage the house and give to our opponents no opportunity for slander. Indeed some widows already have turned away and are following Satan. If any Christian woman has relatives who are widows, she should assist them and should not let the congregation be burdened, in order that it may be able to assist those who are truly widows.

The elders who perform their duties well should be considered worthy of twice their salary, especially those who labor at preaching and teaching. In fact the Scripture states: "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out grain,"

and "The laborer deserves his pay." Do not accept an accusation against an elder unless there are two or three witnesses. In the presence of all the elders correct those who are guilty of transgression, in order that the others may be warned. I adjure you before God and Christ Jesus and the chosen angels to observe these principles without prejudice, being completely impartial. Never be hasty about ordaining anyone; do not become responsible for the sins of others; keep yourself pure. Do not drink only water, but use a little wine for your digestion and for your frequent ailments. The sins of some persons are clearly evident and lead them to destruction; also in the case of others their sins follow them closely. Likewise the deeds which are noble are clearly evident; also those which are the opposite cannot be concealed.

All who are servants in slavery should regard their masters with complete respect, in order that God's name and teaching may not be slandered. Those who have Christian masters should not look down upon them because they are fellow Christians; on the contrary, they should serve them all the more, because they who receive their service are believers and dear to them.

Instruct and encourage the people in these matters. If any person teaches false doctrine and does not adhere to the sound statements of our Lord Jesus Christ and to his sacred teaching, he is conceited and has absolutely no knowledge; on the contrary, he is plagued with controversies and arguments which produce envy, strife, slander, evil suspicions and constant friction among people who are depraved mentally, deprived of the truth and who suppose religion is a source of gain. Now it is true that religion with contentment is a great source of gain. Indeed we bring nothing into the world, and we can take nothing with us. We shall be satisfied if we have food and clothing. Those who wish to become wealthy are tempted and trapped by many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into doom and destruction. In fact a root of all evils is the love of money, and some per-

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sons through their covetousness have wandered away from the faith and have pierced themselves with many griefs.

But you, O man of God, should avoid these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Compete for the prize in the noble contest of faith. Take hold of eternal life, for which purpose you have been called and have made your noble confession in the presence of many witnesses. Before God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who made his noble confession in the presence of Pontius Pilate, I instruct you to keep his command spotless and above reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, which will be revealed at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no human being has seen or can see. To him may there be honor and everlasting dominion. Amen.

Instruct those who are wealthy in this world not to be proud, nor to place their hope on wealth, which is uncertain, but on God, who abundantly supplies us with everything for our enjoyment. Instruct them to do good, to be wealthy in noble deeds, to be generous and liberal, building up for themselves a noble investment for the future. Then they will attain the true life.

O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Turn away from the worldly useless discussions and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, which some persons have professed and have lost sight of the faith.

May his blessing be with you.

To Timothy II

I, PAUL, an apostle of Christ Jesus through God's will to proclaim the promise of the life obtained through Christ Jesus, am writing this letter to you Timothy, my beloved son. I extend to you blessing, mercy and peace from God our Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am grateful to God, whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did, when I think of you in my prayers, as I constantly do night and day. When I remember the tears you shed, I eagerly desire to see you and to be full of joy, for I recall your genuine faith, such as was present first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice; as I am confident it is present also in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the blessing of God which you received when I laid my hands upon you. Indeed God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but a spirit of power, love and self-control. Do not be ashamed of testifying about our Lord nor of me his prisoner; on the contrary, join in the suffering for the sake of the gospel as God gives you power. He has saved us and has called us with a holy calling, not because of our deeds, but as a result of his personal decision and his grace, which was bestowed upon us through Christ Jesus long ago and has now been revealed through the appearance of our Savior Christ Jesus. Christ has annulled death and has brought to light life and immortality through the gospel, of which I have been appointed a herald, apostle and teacher. For this reason I also am experiencing suffering; but I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have my trust placed, and I am confident that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold as your pattern with the faith and love which come through Christ Jesus the sound statements which you heard from me. Guard the noble trust through the Holy Spirit who is present in us.

You realize that everybody in the province of Asia turned away from me; among them are Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord bestow mercy on the household of Onesiphorus, for he frequently gave me encouragement and was not ashamed of my imprisonment. In fact when he arrived at Rome, he hastily looked me up and found me. May the Lord grant that he receive mercy from the Lord on that day. You know very well also all the things he did for me at Ephesus.

- 2 Now you, my son, should be strengthened by the blessing which comes through Christ Jesus. What you have heard from me on the basis of much evidence you should transmit to faithful men who will be able also to teach others. Join in the suffering as a noble soldier of Christ Jesus. If anyone is in military service, he is not encumbered by matters of livelihood, in order that he may please his superior officer. If anyone competes in a contest, he must compete according to the rules in order to be eligible for a prize. If a farmer works hard, he ought to be the first to partake of the produce. Think about what I am saying. Indeed the Lord will give you full understanding. Keep in mind Jesus Christ, raised from the dead and descended from David, as I preach. For this cause I am suffering even imprisonment, as if I were a criminal. But God's word is not imprisoned. Therefore, I am enduring everything for the sake of God's chosen people, in order that they may attain the salvation which comes through Christ Jesus and brings everlasting glory. It is a reliable statement, that if we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we shall deny him, he will also deny us; if we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

Remind the people of these things; adjure them before God not to quarrel, for that is completely useless and detrimental to those who are listening. Be eager to present yourself acceptable to God as a worker with nothing to be ashamed of, teaching the word of truth correctly. Avoid worldly useless discussions, for they promote more and more god-

lessness; and the teaching of such persons spreads as a cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are among them, for they have lost sight of the truth, claiming that the resurrection already has taken place, and they are upsetting the faith of some people. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands firm and has this inscription: "The Lord knows those who belong to him," and "Let him who calls upon the name of the Lord refrain from iniquity." In a large house there are utensils not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and pottery; the former are for special use, the latter for ordinary use. Now whoever separates himself from the latter will be a utensil for special use, consecrated, serviceable to his master, ready for any noble function. Avoid the passions of youth. Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace together with those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart. Reject foolish and stupid controversies, because you realize that they produce quarrels. A servant of the Lord ought not to quarrel; on the contrary, he ought to be kind to everybody, able to teach, patient, kindly instructing the opponents, with the hope that God may grant them a change of heart to acknowledge the truth, and that they may come to their senses and be rescued from the trap of the devil, who has them ensnared to do his will.

You should realize that in the last days there will arise difficult times. In fact people will be selfish, greedy, boastful, haughty, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, thankless, impious, cruel, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, beastly, without any love for what is good, traitorous, reckless, conceited, loving pleasure more than they love God, continuing in an outward form of religion, but denying its essence. Avoid such people. Indeed that type of person enters into houses and captivates young women who are loaded down with sins and influenced by various passions, and who always attempt to learn but never are able to understand the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also they oppose the truth; they are persons who mentally are depraved and

spiritually lack judgment. They shall not, however, continue to make progress, for their foolishness will be evident to everybody, as was the foolishness of those others.

You have followed closely my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, steadfastness, persecutions and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. The Lord has rescued me from all the persecutions I endured. Now everyone who wishes to live a holy life through Christ Jesus will experience persecution; but men who are evil and cunning will become worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. You should stick to what you have learned and have been convinced of, realizing from whom you have learned it and how from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom to obtain salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is inspired by God and is beneficial for teaching doctrine, for refuting error, for correcting faults and for training in an upright life, in order that the man of God may be prepared and equipped for every good function.

- 4 In the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearance and his kingdom I adjure you: preach the word, stand firm both under favorable and unfavorable conditions, refute, admonish and encourage with complete patience and full instruction. In fact there will come a time when people will not submit to sound teaching; but according to their personal desires they will crowd around themselves those who teach what they like to hear, and they will turn away from listening to the truth and will detour after legends. Now you should be on the alert at all times; join in the suffering; perform the work of a missionary; do your full duty.

Indeed I am now about to lose my life, and the time for my death is near. I have competed in the noble contest; I have finished the race; I have guarded the faith. There remains for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

just judge, will give to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who lovingly await his appearance.

Hasten to come to me soon, for Demas has left me for the love of the present world and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has departed for Galatia, and Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him along, for he is useful to me in his assistance. I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the coat I left with Carpus at Troas; bring also the books and especially the parchments. Alexander, the worker in metal, did me much damage. The Lord will repay him for his deeds. Also you should guard against him, for he violently opposed our preaching.

At my first hearing no one was at my side; everyone forsook me. May it not be counted against them. Nevertheless the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, in order that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the heathen Gentiles might hear it. I was rescued from the mouth of the lion. The Lord will rescue me from every evil and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him may there be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Extend greetings to Prisca and Aquila and to the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth. I left Trophimus sick at Miletus. Hasten to come before winter. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the fellow Christians send their greetings to you.

May the Lord be with your spirit. May his blessing be with you.

To Titus

I, PAUL—who am a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to produce in God's chosen people faith and a comprehension of the sacred truth which offers hope of eternal life, as God who never lies promised ages ago and as he has revealed at the proper time through the preaching of his word, with which I have been entrusted upon the authority of God our Savior—I, Paul, am writing this letter to you Titus, a true child in our mutual faith. I extend to you blessing and peace from God our Father and from Christ Jesus our Savior.

I left you at Crete purposely in order that you might arrange what remains to be done and might appoint elders in every city, as I have instructed you—men who are above reproach, married only once, whose children are believers and not accused of wastefulness or insubordination. In fact an overseer must be above reproach since he is God's representative; he cannot be proud, or hot-headed, or a habitual drinker, or contentious or greedy. On the contrary, he should be hospitable, a lover of what is noble, intelligent, just, pious, with self-control, abiding by the genuine word when he instructs. Then he will be able by sound teaching both to give encouragement and to refute the opponents.

Indeed there are many insubordinate persons, who talk at random and deceive souls, especially among the Hebrew cult. They must be silenced, because they upset entire households by teaching what they ought not to teach for the sake of shameful gain. One of their own prophets has stated:

"Cretans are liars always, savage beasts, idle gluttons."

This statement is true. Therefore refute them sharply, in order that they may have a sound faith instead of paying attention to Hebrew legends and commands of people who turn their back to the truth. To the pure everything is pure; but nothing is pure to those who are polluted and without faith, but their

mind and conscience are polluted. They profess to acknowledge God, but through their actions they deny him; they are disgusting, disobedient and unqualified for any noble function.

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Now you should proclaim what is proper to sound teaching. Teach the older men to show self-control, sincerity, intelligence and soundness through their faith, love and steadfastness. Also teach the older women to behave as pious women ought to behave, instead of being gossips or addicted to drink in excess. By setting a good example they will train the young women to love their husbands and children, to show intelligence and purity, to be good home-makers and subordinate to their husbands; then God's word will not be discredited. Also encourage the younger men to show intelligence in all matters, by presenting yourself as a pattern for noble deeds, for purity and sincerity in teaching and for language which is sound and unobjectionable; then your opponent will be put to shame, because he will not be able to say anything bad about us. Encourage servants in all matters to be subordinate to their masters and to try to please them, without opposing or stealing from them, but demonstrating complete and noble faithfulness; then in all their actions they will be a credit to the teaching of God our Savior. In fact the blessing of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all mankind and instructing us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, to live intelligently, justly and piously in the present world and to await with blessed expectation the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus. He has sacrificed himself in our behalf in order to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a special people, eager to do what is noble.

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These things you should proclaim; both encourage and reprove with complete authority; let no one defy you. Remind the people to be subordinate and obedient to established authorities, to be ready for every noble function, to be disrespectful to no one, to be congenial and reasonable, demonstrating complete gentleness to all people. Indeed at one time also we

were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various passions and pleasures, full of spite and envy, hated and hating one another. When the goodness and kindheartedness of God our Savior appeared, however, he saved us, not because of any deeds of righteousness which we had performed, but as a result of his mercy, by the washing which regenerates and renews us through the Holy Spirit, which he has poured upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. Therefore, since we have been justified by his grace, we have become heirs with the expectation of eternal life.

This statement is reliable, and I wish you to be positive about these things; then those who have faith in God will be serious about displaying noble actions. These things are noble and beneficial to mankind. But avoid foolish controversies, family trees, strife and legal quarrels; for they are unbeneficial and worthless. Reject a person who makes propaganda for a sect after you have warned him the second time; for you realize that such a person is perverted and sinful, condemning himself.

When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, hasten to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send with haste Zenas the lawyer and Apollos; see to it that they lack nothing. Let our people also learn to display noble actions in cases of essential need; then they will not be unfruitful.

All who are with me send their greetings to you. Extend greetings to those who love us faithfully.

May his blessing be with all of you.

To Philemon

I, PAUL, a prisoner for the cause of Christ Jesus, am writing this letter together with our fellow Christian Timothy to you Philemon, our beloved fellow worker, and to Apphia, our fellow Christian lady, to Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the members of the congregation which meets at your home. We extend to you blessing and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am grateful to God every time I think of you in my prayers and every time I hear of the faith you have in our Lord Jesus and the love you demonstrate toward all Christians. I pray that their contact with your faith may help them recognize everything among us which is advantageous for Christ's cause. In fact I have received abundant joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the Christians are rejuvenated through you, fellow Christian.

Therefore, although I am at complete liberty as a Christian to demand of you what is proper, I prefer to make a request in view of your love and my present situation as a representative of Christ Jesus and a temporary prisoner for his cause. My request concerns my young follower, whom I have brought to faith while I have been in prison. I refer to Onesimus, who formerly was a disappointment to you but now has become an encouragement to each of us.

I am sending him back to you. He is very close to my heart. I was thinking about keeping him here with me, to assist me in your behalf while I am in prison for the gospel. I do not, however, wish to do anything without your approval. Nor do I wish a favor from you on the basis of obligation instead of free will. Perhaps he ran away temporarily in order that you might reclaim him permanently. No longer regard him as a slave. On the contrary, consider him as more than a slave, as a beloved fellow Christian. He is very close to me. How much

more should he be to you both as a human being and as a Christian! If you count me as a friend, receive him as you would receive me.

Now if he has caused you any loss or owes you any money, charge it to me. I, Paul, am putting it in writing that I will reimburse you. It is not necessary to remind you that you are personally indebted to me. Yes, fellow Christian, may I be proud of having brought you to faith in the Lord. It is your turn to give my heart Christian joy.

I am writing you this letter, confident of your favorable reaction, because I know that you will do even more than I am asking. By the way, get a room ready for me, for I expect that in answer to your prayers I shall have the pleasure of being with you.

I extend to you greetings from Epaphras, who is also a captive with me for the cause of Christ Jesus, and from my fellow workers, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke.

May the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.